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SUBJECT: SPANISH MILITARY ON CURRENT DEPLOYMENTS, NATO/RIGA
PRIORITIES, & BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

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Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY: Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Dan Fata discussed the NATO Riga Summit, Defense Minister Alonso's upcoming meeting with Secretary Rumsfeld, current Spanish deployments, and the NCIS/OSI issue with top Spanish military and defense leaders on Sept 5-6. Fata praised Spain's troop contributions to the NATO Response Force (NRF) and noted that the US and Spain have common goals for the Riga Summit. Spanish defense policy leaders told Fata that they would deploy troops to Lebanon right away and that Spain remains committed to Afghanistan and other NATO operations. See septel for discussion of NCIS/OSI issue. END SUMMARY.

12. (C/NF) Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Dan Fata met on September 5 with Chief of Defense General Felix Sanz, who was accompanied by LTG Bernardo Alvarez de Manzano (head of Joint Operations Command), Admiral Jose Maria Teran (director of the Joint Staff), and RADM Fernando Gea (chief of staff to Sanz). On September 6, Fata met with MOD Secretary General for Defense Policy Admiral Francisco Torrente, MOD Director General for Defense Policy Major General Benito Raggio, MOD Deputy Director General for International Policy RADM Enrique Perez Ramirez, Spanish President of the Permanent Committee (PC) RADM Francisco Hernandez, and Spanish PC Vice President AMB Jose Ignacio Carbajal. Spanish Defense Attache in Washington BG Antonio Valderrabano attended both meetings. In addition, Fata held a roundtable discussion on NATO and EU issues with a group of defense and think tank opinion leaders.

-- LEBANON/UNIFIL and CURRENT TROOP COMMITMENTS --

13. (C/NF) General Sanz emphasized that Spain is more willing than most NATO allies to deliver on its troop commitments. He noted that, following completion of NRF Rotation 10, Spain will be the single largest troop contributor to the NRF (a total of 21,000 troops). Sanz also noted that Spain is the only Ally to have deployed a land component. Sanz said that Spain has spent 600 million euros in 2006 on deployments, takes care of its own airlift, and puts boots on the ground when others won't. He said that with 89,000 army troops in a total military of 140,000, Spain can keep 3000-4000 troops deployed continuously without much trouble. (NOTE: The GOS will not deploy more than 3000 troops at a time.) Sanz noted that Spain is transforming its military to ensure that all its forces are deployable. Spain currently has five heavy brigades and three light brigades, all of which are deployable.

14. (C/NF) Sanz said that a Spanish Marine amphibious battalion would sail out of Rota navy base on Sept 8,

assuming Parliamentary approval of the UNIFIL deployment on Sept 7, and would arrive in Lebanon on September 11 or 12. Sanz said that the Spanish troops would combine with Polish, Finnish, Irish, and possibly Portuguese troops to form a multi-national brigade. He said that Spain would replace the Marine battalion with a mechanized battalion of Spanish Legion troops in a few months.

15. (C/NF) Fata noted Spain's numerous deployments as well as its contributions to the NATO Reaction Force and asked Sanz if the addition of a significant deployment to Lebanon would cause Spain any trouble fulfilling its commitments. Sanz said that Spain can sustain regular rotations of troops for its current commitments. He said that Spain is modifying its participation in NATO and EU operations in the Balkans. By the end of the year, Spain will have one company (200 people) in Bosnia, and that one regiment will be responsible for rotating its companies in and out. For Kosovo, Sanz said that he has offered NATO a battalion of tactical reserve troops within KFOR. He noted that while Spain has commanded a brigade in Kosovo, it has never commanded KFOR. Sanz told Fata that while the EU mission to Congo has several units assigned, a company of Spanish Legion soldiers are the only troops actually in Congo. He said that Spain is also the NATO country currently providing air defense in the Baltics, and reminded Fata that Spain is a major player in Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean, providing up to three ships at a time.

16. (C/NF) On Afghanistan, Sanz said that Spain would like to command NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) at some point, considering its strong commitment to the mission. He noted that the GOS had gracefully accepted the opportunity to review its position on ISAF command when NATO

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changed the ISAF command structure earlier this year, but that he was pushing his government to work for Spanish command of ISAF 11. Sanz said that Spanish troops are doing a good job at the Spanish Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and at the Forward Support Base (FSB). Spain has equipped its forces well with five medivac helicopters and a C-295 transport plane permanently assigned to the FSB. Spain also spent three million euros to install an all-weather runway at the PRT. Sanz pointed out that a platoon of Spanish Quick Reaction Force (QRF) troops is now stationed at the nearby US PRT.

17. (C/NF) In response to a question about whether Spain assigns units to both the NRF and EU battlegroups, Sanz said that Spain only double counts a few troops and he complained that other troops are too slow to contribute to the NRF. He said that Spain contributes to three EU battlegroups: a group of Marines based on a Spanish brigade and an Italian battalion, a land group based on a Spanish mountain brigade that includes a company each of French and German troops, and a third group based on a French/German brigade. Sanz said that interoperability within NATO is generally good, but that it depends on the type of operation. He said that infantry troops operate together easily (noting that common language is more important than good radios), and noted that Spain successfully deployed F-18s with the US in Kosovo. He said that in a heavy operation like the beginning of Iraq war, interoperability would be much more difficult.

-- NATO RIGA SUMMIT PRIORITIES --

18. (C/NF) During meetings with General Raggio and General Sanz, Fata emphasized that Spain and the US share a common view on most of the NATO's Riga Summit priorities. Fata lauded Spain's positive contribution to NATO and encouraged the GOS to trumpet recent successes such as the NRF Live Exercise in Cape Verde and the NRF deployment to Pakistan in an effort to build more public support for NATO. Raggio said that Spain is interested in exploring the concept of Global Partnership, but noted that NATO's existing partnerships are

different from each other and effective because they conform to these differences. He said that new partnerships should be considered carefully. Regarding a possible Middle East Training Center, Raggio said that Spain is not opposed to the idea. He said that it would be best to start slowly, using existing training centers and measuring the level of interest, before building a new training location in the Middle East.

¶9. (C/NF) NRF: Sanz said that fixing the NRF force generation process should be a Riga Summit priority. Because countries fail to contribute support units, a force provider like Spain that contributes 5000 combat troops has to come up with an equivalent number of support troops. Sanz also complained that some countries offer two staff officers and feel that they are contributing to the NRF. He said that these countries don't understand the allied spirit. Fata said that the NRF is a critical issue for Riga, and said that the US supports a test of common funding for short-term NRF operations in hopes that it would help solve the force generation problems.

¶10. (C/NF) ISAF Stage 4 Transition: Fata told Sanz that some allies have indicated support for a quick move to Stage 4, whereas the US and other Allies are carefully reviewing the security situation in RC South and considering whether the conditions are appropriate to move to Stage 4 in the near term. Sanz noted that Spanish troops participate in ISAF, but not in Coalition activities. He said that he appreciates the important activities of the US, UK, Canada, and Netherlands, but can't work with them in non-ISAF activities. He said that his technical preference is to move to Stage 4 in the near term, because having all troops under a unified command would make coordination easier. At the same time, he noted that the allies need to be cautious and shouldn't leave Stage 3 until it is complete or nearly complete.

¶11. (C/NF) SAI: As reported in reftel, Perez Ramirez and Raggio told Fata that Spain has its own national plan for strategic airlift which covers its needs. Perez Ramirez explained that Spain's plan focuses on rental contracts at present and the A-400M in the longer term. For now, Spain prefers to rent rather than buy aircraft. He said that Spain continues to observe meetings regarding the NATO consortium but has no intention to participate.

¶12. (C/NF) Raggio encouraged the US to support Spain's

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Zaragoza air base as the location for NATO's air-ground surveillance system. He said that it is a high quality base, built by the US, that provides advantages that other competitors don't offer. He asked that the US support a fair technical review process to ensure that Zaragoza's advantages are fully considered.

-- US-SPAIN RELATIONSHIP --

¶13. (C/NF) Both Raggio and Sanz emphasized that the US and Spain have a good relationship, but could communicate even more frequently. Raggio called for a constant strategic dialogue at all levels. He said that there has been a good flow of visits and meetings over the past year, and that we should build on that foundation. Sanz said that the US and Spain have had a strong military-to-military relationship since 1953, but said that it is time to reinforce efforts for training exchanges and interchange of units, especially on the army side. Sanz suggested a possible meeting with the US Chairman of the Joint Staff and emphasized the need for the High-Level Defense Committee to meet regularly to send a strong public signal that Spain and the US are allies that can discuss all issues with no limits.

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